

Message Text

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73

ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 L-03 NEA-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 USIA-15 TRSE-00 MBFR-03

SAJ-01 OC-06 CCO-00 EB-11 COME-00 USPS-02 OMB-01

RSR-01 /101 W

----- 110048

R 311633Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8560

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USNMR SHAPE

USDEL MC

USCINCEUR

CINCUSAFE

CINCUSAREUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

JCS WASHDC

USAFPCS DIST BRUSSELS BELGIUM

USAFPCS EUR ME RGN, RHEIN MAIN AB GERMANY//DO

NATO/SHAPE SUPPORT GROUP BELGIUM

USAFPCS ALEX VA//DO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MILI, MARR, BE

SUBJECT: BELGIAN CUSTOMS AND THE APO

REF: BRUSSELS 4563

1. ON AUGUST 31, WE MADE SECOND CALL ON DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR
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CUSTOMS GOOSSENS TO FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION REPORTED REFTEL. EMBOFFS

RECOUNTED IN GENERAL TERMS THE RESULTS OF A RECENT SURVEY OF INCOMING AND OUTGOING PARCELS AT APO 09055 (SHAPE), EMPHASIZING THAT THE AVERAGE VALUE PER PARCEL WAS LESS THAN 1,000 BELGIAN FRANCS, I.E., CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN HALF OF THE FIGURE BELGIANS CUSTOMS OFFICIALS ANTICIPATE WILL BE USED FOR DETERMINING WHETHER DUTIES ARE PAYABLE (2,500 - 3,000BF). GOOSSENS (AND MATHYS, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT) REPEATED THEIR EARLIER ASSURANCE THAT THE BELGIAN CUSTOMS DIRECTIVE OF MAY 21 HAD NOT BEEN ISSUED WITH THE INTENTION OF COLLECTING REVENUE. CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO THE NEED TO PREVENT THE USE OF THE MAILS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF CONTRABAND GOODS, PARTICULARLY DRUGS, INTO BELGIUM, WITH EMBOFFS AGAIN PROMISING FULL COOPERATION WITH BELGIAN AUTHORITIES IN THIS REGARD. ON THE SUBJECT OF HOW CUSTOMS CONTROL WOULD BE EXERCISED, GOOSSENS FORESAW THAT SOMETHING FAR SHORT OF DAILY INSPECTIONS WOULD BE REQUIRED.

2. AS FORESEEN IN REFTEL, EMBOFFS PRESENTED GOOSSENS WITH DRAFT TEXT OF A LETTER OUTLINING THE EMBASSY'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE WAY IN WHICH THE CUSTOMS DIRECTIVE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED AND RESERVING THE RIGHT TO REOPEN DISCUSSIONS SHOULD IMPLEMENTATION PROVE TO BE UNSATISFACTORY. AFTER A CAREFUL READING OF THE DRAFT, BOTH GOOSSENS AND MATHYS SAID THEY FORESAW NO PROBLEMS WHATSOEVER AND OFFERED TO DRAFT A NONCONTENTIOUS RESPONSE. AS SOON AS MATHYS NOTIFIES US NEXT WEEK THAT OUR DRAFT HAS BEEN "OFFICIALLY" APPROVED, WE PLAN TO SEND THE LETTER ADDRESSED TO GOOSSENS AND SIGNED BY EMBOFF (FIRST SECRETARY). THEREAFTER, WE RECOMMEND THAT THE APO OFFICE AT ZAVENTEM BE INSTRUCTED TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS PROMPTLY WITH THE ZAVENTEM CUSTOMS OFFICIALS TO COMMENCE BELGIAN CUSTOMS CONTROL.

3. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF DRAFT LETTER LEFT WITH GOOSSENS:

BEGIN TEXT

FOLLOWING DISCUSSIONS EARLIER THIS MONTH, I WOULD LIKE TO CONFIRM OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCEDURES WHICH WILL BE FOLLOWED IN APPLICATION OF YOUR DIRECTIVE D.L. 1/28.669 OF MAY 21, 1973.

IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE DIRECTIVE WAS ISSUED WITH A VIEW TO ASSURING THE EXERCISE OF CUSTOMS CONTROL OVER IMPORTS AND EXPORTS THAT MOVE IN FOREIGN MILITARY POSTAL CHANNELS. MOREOVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE WAS A DESIRE TO GIVE EQUAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TREATMENT TO THE MILITARY POSTAL FACILITIES OF ALL FOREIGN NATO MEMBER FORCES PRESENT IN BELGIUM. FINALLY, WE APPRECIATE THAT A MAJOR MOTIVATING FACTOR BEHIND THE DIRECTIVE WAS THE DESIRE TO PREVENT THE USE OF FOREIGN MILITARY POSTAL FACILITIES FOR THE FREE MOVEMENT OF CONTRABAND OR OTHERWISE PROHIBITED GOODS OR OTHER MATERIAL REQUIRING SPECIAL ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION.

WE NATURALLY SHARE BELGIAN CONCERNS THAT OUR MILITARY POSTAL FACILITIES NOT BE USED IN ANY WAY DETRIMENTAL TO THE INTERESTS OF

THE HOST COUNTRY. WE ARE, THEREFORE, DESIROUS OF COOPERATING WITH AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE THE OBSERVATION OF BELGIAN LAWS AND REGULATIONS. MOREOVER, WE ALSO WISH TO ASSURE THAT INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF UNITED STATES FORCES IN BELGIUM DO NOT USE THE UNITED STATES MILITARY POSTAL SERVICE FOR THE IMPORTATION OF GOODS NOT INTENDED FOR THE PERSONAL USE OF THEMSELVES OR THEIR FAMILIES.

AS WE STATED DURING OUR DISCUSSIONS, WE WOULD HOPE TO AVOID PROBLEMS THAT WOULD RESULT FROM ASSESSMENT OF DUTIES ON ITEMS RECEIVED FOR THE PERSONAL USE OF MEMBERS OF THE FORCE AND THEIR FAMILIES, INCLUDING ITEMS SENT TO THEM BY RELATIVES AND FRIENDS IN THE UNITED STATES. AS A RESULT OF OUR TALKS, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE IMPORTATION OF REASONABLE QUANTITIES OF GOODS FOR PERSONAL USE OF OUR FORCES WILL NOT BE SUBJECT TO BELGIAN DUTY OR TAXES. ON THAT BASIS, WE WOULD NOT ANTICIPATE CASES INVOLVING THE ASSESSMENT AND COLLECTION OF DUTIES OR A REQUIREMENT FOR IMPORT OR EXPORT LICENSES WITH RESPECT TO PERSONAL GOODS DESTINED FOR THE FORCES.

IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, WE PROPOSE TO ASK THE UNITED STATES MILITARY POSTAL AUTHORITIES TO GIVE THEIR FULL COOPERATION TO BELGIAN CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES IN THE FULFILLMENT OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES. SHOULD PROBLEMS ARISE, WE UNDERSTAND THAT EITHER OF US MAY REOPEN THE SUBJECT TO WORK OUT MORE SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS.

END TEXT

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